

metropolitan planning organization plans and programs; (d) whether the project is consistent with plans and programs developed by empowerment zone and community organizations; (e) whether the project is consistent with plans developed for compliance with the Clean Air Act; (f) whether or not the project is supported by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency or by the General Services Administration; and (g) whether or not the project has or will require a Presidential Permit.

10. Proposed Project Time-line

The Applicant should include a proposed project time-line with estimated start and completion dates for major elements of the proposed project such as:

- (a) Development phase activities (planning, feasibility analysis, revenue forecasting, environmental review, preliminary engineering and design work, and other preconstruction activities);
- (b) Inclusion of the project in the relevant State and metropolitan transportation improvement plans;
- (c) Approval needed for any required Presidential Permits;
- (d) Acquisition of real property (including land related to the project and improvements to land); and
- (e) Construction, reconstruction, and/or rehabilitation activities.

The Applicant also should describe the results of any preliminary engineering or preconstruction activities done to date and relate it to the project time-line.

Transportation Border Congestion Relief Program Development Agreement

After a project is accepted for administration under the TBCR Program, the next major action by the Applicant would be to work with DOT, the relevant border State, municipalities, Indian tribal government(s), Federal agencies, and foreign jurisdictions to draft a TBCR Program Development Agreement for the project (Development Agreement). The Development Agreement would address the commitments of all parties to the project (Federal, State, municipal and private) with respect to the financing, planning and design, environmental process, construction, operations, maintenance, and other components. The Development Agreement would also identify the specific objectives of the project and performance measures that would be used to evaluate the success of the project in achieving these objectives.

DOT Resources and Commitments To Expedite the Delivery of the Border Crossing Project

If a project is selected for participation in the TBCR Program, the DOT will work with the project sponsor to expedite the delivery of the project. Potential DOT resources and commitments include:

A. Federal Transportation Border Congestion Relief Project Team

The DOT will work with the relevant Federal agencies with an interest in the land border crossing to establish a senior-level Federal border congestion team to advance the planning and implementation of the project, including expediting, to the maximum extent practicable, their reviews for relevant permits or other approvals, and take related actions as necessary, consistent with available resources and applicable laws.

B. Accelerated Review and Conditional Approval of Experimental Features Under the FHWA SEP-15 Process

Special Experimental Project 15 (SEP-15) is designed to permit tests and experimentation in the project development process for title 23, United States Code projects. Potential areas of experimentation for TBCR Program projects include innovative finance, tolling and contracting requirements. More information about the SEP-15 program is available on the following Web site: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ppp/index.htm>. The DOT is considering further experimental programs that may apply to the approved projects.

C. Expedited Commitment Process for TIFIA Credit Assistance

The TIFIA program provides three forms of credit assistance—secured loans, loan guarantees, and standby lines of credit—for surface transportation projects of national or regional significance. Each border State seeking to incorporate TIFIA credit assistance as part of a project finance plan can receive a preliminary TIFIA commitment under SEP-15.

The DOT would work with each project sponsor to establish a preliminary plan of finance incorporating TIFIA assistance. This preliminary commitment would expedite the loan review process to be undertaken should the border State's selected concessionaire seek TIFIA assistance. Information about the TIFIA credit program is available on the following Web site: <http://tifa.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

D. Priority Access to DOT Experts

Projects accepted for the TBCR Program will have access to DOT experts knowledgeable in the areas of planning, the environment, public-private partnerships, finance, construction, safety, operations, and asset management.

E. Other Discretionary Funding

The DOT will work with Applicant(s) to identify other possible discretionary funding sources.

F. Tolling and Private Activity Bonds (PAB)

Applicant(s) may consider applying to DOT for authority to toll any Federal-aid highway as part of a TBCR project. The use of tolls would not only help finance the road, but the use of tolls also, if the amounts are varied, could help manage the volume of traffic utilizing the crossing at any given point during the day. Applicants may also consider applying for an allocation of PAB authority under Section 11143 of SAFETEA-LU as part of a TBCR project. The DOT will work with any selected Applicant(s) to explore what options might be available in these areas.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 101.

Issued on: May 23, 2008.

Thomas J. Barrett,
Deputy Secretary.

[FR Doc. E8-12055 Filed 5-29-08; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Improvements to the Danbury Rail Branch in Connecticut

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT), in cooperation with the Southwest Regional Planning Agency and Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials, intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on proposed commuter rail transit service and infrastructure improvements along the New Haven Line, Danbury Branch Rail Line in Connecticut. The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority's Metro North Railroad

operates the New Haven Rail Line service for ConnDOT and is a cooperating agency in the EIS process.

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and its implementing regulations by the Council on the Environmental Quality (40 CFR parts 1500–1508) and FTA/FHWA (23 CFR 771), as well as provisions of section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA–LU). The Draft EIS will be combined with the planning Alternatives Analysis required by Federal Transit law [49 U.S.C. 5309(a)] for projects proposed for New Starts or Small Starts funding.

The purpose of this notice is to alert interested parties regarding the intent to prepare the EIS, to provide and solicit information on the nature of the proposed project and possible alternatives, to invite public participation in the NEPA process (including providing comments on the scope of the EIS), and to announce that three public scoping meetings will be conducted.

DATES: A series of three public scoping meetings will be held in the project's study area. The public scoping meetings will be held the week of June 16, 2008 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in the Towns of Wilton, Ridgefield, and New Milford, Connecticut. The following is the meeting schedule: Tuesday, June 17th 2008, E. Paul Martin Room, Town Hall, Top Floor, 10 Main Street, New Milford, CT 06776; Wednesday, June 18th, 2008, Town Hall Annex Building, Meeting Room A, 238 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT 06897; Thursday, June 19th 2008, Town Hall large conference room, Ridgefield Town Hall, 400 Main Street, Ridgefield, CT 06877. The project's initial statement of purpose and need, and the initial set of alternatives proposed for the study will be presented at these meetings. Comments may be given verbally or in writing at the scoping meeting. Every reasonable effort will be made to meet special needs. The meetings locations will be accessible to persons with disabilities. Individuals who require special accommodations, such as sign language interpreter, to participate in the meeting should contact Mr. Judd Everhart, Public Relations Office, Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131–7546 or by telephone at (860) 594–3003.

Agency Scoping Meeting: An agency scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 17, 2008, 1–3 p.m., City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue, Danbury,

CT 06810. Meeting invitations along with the scoping information packet will be sent to all Federal, State, local and tribal governmental agencies that may have an interest in the proposed project.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to the following address by July 25, 2008: Mr. Andrew H. Davis, Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington, CT 06131–7546 or [http://www.andrew.h.davis@po.state.ct.us](mailto:www.andrew.h.davis@po.state.ct.us). The locations of the scoping meetings are given above under **DATES**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Donald Burns, AICP, Senior Planner, Region II, Federal Transit Administration, One Bowling Green, Room 429, New York, NY 10004. Telephone: (212) 668–2170.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

The Feasibility Study: Danbury Branch Electrification—Phase I (Feasibility Study), completed in 2006, developed the alternatives being considered in the Alternatives Analysis/Draft EIS (AA/DEIS) for the New Haven Line's commuter rail branch line service between Norwalk and Danbury. The Feasibility Study identified, reviewed, and evaluated a range of preliminary improvements to the Branch, including electrification, addition of passing sidings, extension of rail passenger commuter service to New Milford, and track realignments. Public information meetings were held on November 29, 2005 at the Wilton Town Hall Annex and on December 1, 2005 at the former New Milford Railroad Station, to present and discuss the results of the Feasibility Study and the alternatives recommended for further consideration in the AA/DEIS. A scoping coordination meeting was held on July 11, 2006 to discuss the scope of work with the Federal and State resource agencies, including the environmental resources to be investigated, the level of detail required for each resource, and further refinement of the alternatives.

The AA/DEIS will continue the evaluation initiated in the Feasibility Study with more detailed analysis. The Feasibility Study documentation and Final Report was published in May 2006 and can be viewed on the project Web site at <http://www.danburybranchstudy.com>.

I. Scoping

Scoping of the EIS will be accomplished through public meetings; e-mail and hard copy correspondence with interested individuals and organizations, Federal, State, and local agencies, and Native American Tribes;

and through a meeting with potential cooperating and participating public agencies. Interested parties may comment by: (1) Mailing or e-mailing written comments to the address under **ADDRESSES** above; or (2) attending one of the public scoping meetings described under **DATES** above. The FTA and ConnDOT invite all interested individuals and organizations, public agencies, and Native American Tribes to comment on the scope of the EIS including the project's purpose and need, the alternatives to be considered, the impacts to be evaluated, and the evaluation methodologies to be used. Comments at this stage should focus on refining the purpose and need statement, identifying alternatives to meet the purpose and need at lower cost or with less impact, and on identifying specific social, economic, or environmental impacts to be evaluated. The scoping period will end July 25, 2008. A scoping information packet will be posted on the project Web site at <http://www.danburybranchstudy.com> and hard copies of the packet will be distributed upon request.

During the scoping process, ConnDOT and FTA will comply with section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA–LU) requires that the lead agencies: (1) Extend an invitation to other Federal and non-Federal agencies and Native American tribes that may have an interest in the proposed project to become participating agencies; (2) provide an opportunity for involvement by participating agencies and the public in defining the purpose and need for the proposed project and the range of alternatives to be considered in the EIS; and (3) establish a plan for coordinating public and agency participation in, and comment on, the environmental review process.

II. Purpose and Need

The preliminary statement of the purpose of, and need for, the proposed project follows:

The purpose of the Danbury Branch Improvement Program and Electrification is to improve mobility options for the traveling public in the South Western and Housatonic Valley regions of Connecticut; to maintain and improve existing commuter rail service on the Branch, as well as to improve its feeder system and intermodal connections on the Branch; and to help reduce congestion in the Route 7 corridor between South Norwalk, CT and New Milford, CT.

To accomplish these purposes, the following specific objectives are defined:

- Improve interstate and intrastate transit mobility, along the north-south South Norwalk—New Milford Corridor.
- Examine enhancements to existing transit services in the corridor by electrifying the branch or portions of it.
- Enhance economic development and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities in conjunction with participating cities and towns land use plans.
- Improve mobility in the South Norwalk—New Milford Corridor by attracting trips to transit service.

Interested parties are invited to consider and comment on this preliminary statement of the purpose and need for the proposed project.

III. Alternatives

The general location of the study corridor is the existing Danbury Branch Rail Line which traverses 23.6 miles from South Norwalk, through Wilton, Cannondale, Branchville, Redding, and Bethel to Danbury, and the potential extension of the line 14.3 miles into New Milford. The project termini would be the existing branch line's southern terminus at its connection with the New Haven Line in South Norwalk, and the proposed new northern terminus in New Milford. The EIS will examine and evaluate a number of rail service and infrastructure improvement alternatives in the corridor. Additional alternatives generated by the scoping process as well as alternative station locations for the Build alternatives will also be considered.

The alternatives proposed for consideration in the EIS as a result of the Feasibility Study (2006) include: (A) The No-build alternative; (B) a Transportation System Management alternative, which include service improvements such as new outbound service, and express service; (C) South Norwalk to Danbury Improvements including electrification, addition of passing sidings, and minor track realignment; (D) extension of diesel passenger service from Danbury to New Milford with improvements including new stations and minor track realignment; and (E) partial electrification from South Norwalk to the vicinity of the Merritt 7 Station with feeder bus/rail service to complement the new service. The EIS will incorporate data and findings from the Final Report of the *Feasibility Study Danbury Branch Electrification (May 2006)*. Copies of this report are available from Mr. Andrew H. Davis of ConnDOT at the address shown above under

ADDRESSES and on the project Web site at <http://www.danburybranchstudy.com>.

Interested parties are invited to consider and comment on the alternatives proposed for consideration in the AA/DEIS.

IV. Probable Effects

FTA and ConnDOT will evaluate all significant environmental and community impacts of the alternatives that emerge from the scoping process. FTA expects the major issue to be rail noise and vibration impacts at nearby residences, property acquisition and relocation of the businesses and residences located on the acquired properties. These and any other impacts will be evaluated for both the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Measures to mitigate adverse impacts will be developed for the AA/DEIS and finalized in the Final EIS. Interested parties are invited to consider and comment on the impacts to be evaluated in the AA/DEIS and on options and measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts.

V. FTA Procedures

In accordance with 23 CFR 771.105(a) and 771.133, FTA and ConnDOT will comply with all Federal environmental laws, regulations, and executive orders applicable to the proposed project during the environmental review process. These requirements include, but are not limited to, the environmental and public hearing provisions of Federal transit laws (49 U.S.C. 5301(e), 5323(b), and 5324); the project-level air quality conformity regulation of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (40 CFR Part 93); Section 404(b)(1) guidelines of EPA (40 CFR Part 230); the regulation implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR Part 800); the regulation implementing section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (50 CFR Part 402); Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act (23 CFR part 774); and Executive Orders 12898 on Environmental Justice, 11988 on Floodplain Management, and 11990 on Wetlands.

ConnDOT anticipates seeking federal assistance from the FTA to fund the proposed project under 49 United States Code 5309 and will, therefore, be subject to regulations (49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 611). Accordingly, following the public comment period for the AA/DEIS, ConnDOT will select a locally preferred alternative based on ridership forecasts,

service performance evaluation, estimated capital and operating costs, environmental impacts, social and economic impacts, and community support. ConnDOT will seek FTA approval to initiate Small Starts Project Development, and if FTA so approves, the Final EIS will be prepared in conjunction with the New Starts/Small Starts process.

Date Issued: May 21, 2008.

Brigid Hynes-Cherin,
Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration.

[FR Doc. E8-12098 Filed 5-29-08; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-2008-0108]

Quiet Cars Notice of Public Meeting and Request for Comments

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of public meeting, request for information.

SUMMARY: NHTSA is having a public meeting to bring together government policymakers, stakeholders from the blind community, industry representatives and public interest groups to discuss the safety of blind pedestrians encountering quiet cars including hybrids, all-electric vehicles and quiet internal combustion engine vehicles. This public meeting and the request for information, is an opportunity for an exchange among interested parties, as well as the public, on the technical and safety policy issues related to increasingly quieter cars and blind pedestrians. The date, time, location, and framework for this public meeting are announced in this notice.

DATES: *Public Meeting:* The public meeting will be held on June 23, 2008, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC.

Comments: Written comments may be submitted to the agency and must be received no later than August 1, 2008.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mrs. Debbie Ascone, Office of the Senior Associate Administrator for Vehicle Safety, NHTSA, telephone 202-366-4383, e-mail Debbie.Ascone@dot.gov. She may also be reached at 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC 20590.

ADDRESSES: *Public meeting:* The public meeting will be held at the Grand Hyatt